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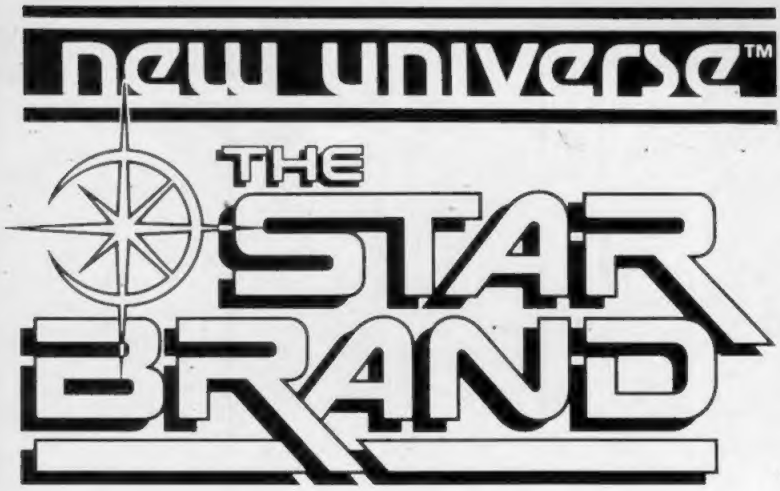
THE STAR BRAND™
THE NEXT GENERATION!



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The Star Brand . . . the most potent object of power the Earth has ever seen. Where it came from, how it got to Earth, what energies it employs are unfathomable mysteries. Whosoever wields its power can do virtually anything. The only limitation to its use is the imagination and courage of its wielder.

So far two men of Earth have possessed its power. The first, known only as the Old Man, was a Dutch count who acquired the Star Brand some 500 years ago. He kept the power a secret while it grew inside his body, aging his body very slowly. Eventually he realized that the power was too unstable for him to ever control, and on July 22, 1986, the Old Man tried to transfer its power to an asteroid. The flash of energy caused by the transfer atomized the asteroid and sent the Star Brand's awesome energies cascading into space, bombarding the earth with mutagenic energy. This, dubbed the White Event, lasted less than two seconds, but had worldwide consequences. Two human beings in every million were affected by those energies, and began to change, assuming paranormal forms and abilities.

Realizing he still possessed a fraction of its nigh-infinite power, the Old Man passed the Star Brand along to another human being, Pittsburgh-born car mechanic Kenneth Connell. Connell employed the Star Brand energies for months, fending off the Old Man's efforts to test his abilities, and finally decided to assume the dual identity of a costumed hero. But when Connell realized that he could not wield the power wisely enough, he too tried to transfer the Star Brand's power into an inanimate object. Soaring ten miles high above his home, Connell transferred the Star Brand into a bent dumbbell, only to have its alien energies totally obliterate everything within a 50-mile wide sphere around him, including the city of Pittsburgh. Connell's body itself was disintegrated in the Black Event, but has since been resurrected by the power of the Star Brand.

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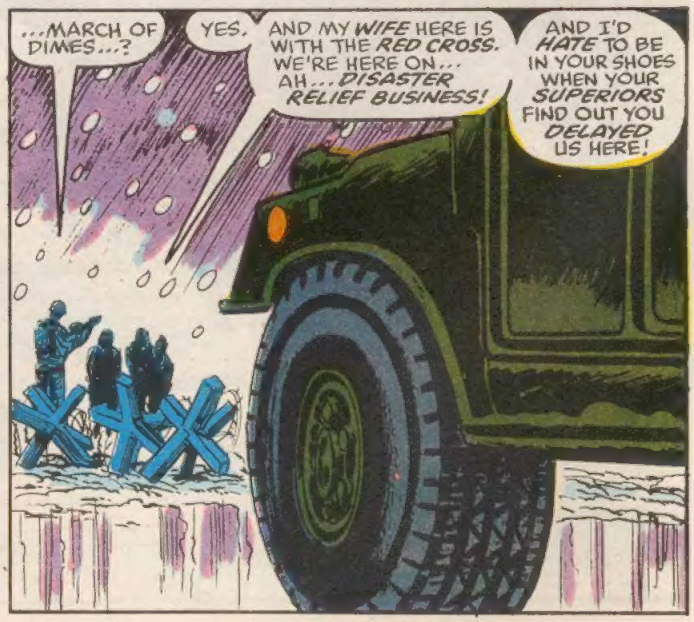
GHOSTS
THREE MILES FROM THE PITT.
FEBRUARY 29th, 1988
LOOK, LADY, I TOLDJA A HUNNERT TIMES AWREADY.
NOBODY GETS THROUGH. NOBODY!
BUT...
BUT I GOTTA. I GOTTA SEE!

YEAH, YOU AN' EVERY OTHER GHOUL F'RA THOUSAND MILES 'ROUND.
NOW BEAT IT!
ROG... WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING! IT'S NO GOOD FOR MADDIE TO BE GETTING SO UPSET.
NOT IN HER CONDITION.

PLEASE... I AIN'T A GHOUL. I'M FROM PITTSBURGH.
EVERYBODY I KNOW WUZ THERE...
...MY MOM...

LOOK, KID...
I DON'T WANNA PLAY HARDCASE WITH YOU, OKAY? BUT I GOT MY ORDERS.
NOBODY GETS ANY CLOSER THAN THIS WITHOUT THEY GOT PERMITS.
LET ME HANDLE THIS, DEB.

WHO'RE YOU, SHORTY?
THE NAME'S PRICE, SOLDIER. ROGER PRICE. I'M DIRECTOR OF THE NORTH CENTRAL OHIO DIVISION OF THE MARCH OF DIMES.
MY CARD...


...MARCH OF DIMES...?
YES.
AND MY WIFE HERE IS WITH THE RED CROSS. WE'RE HERE ON... AH... DISASTER RELIEF BUSINESS!
AND I'D HATE TO BE IN YOUR SHOES WHEN YOUR SUPERIORS FIND OUT YOU DELAYED US HERE!

DON'T GET HIGH AN' MIGHTY WITH ME, BUDDY. MARCH O' DIMES OR NO, WHAT'S SOMEBODY FR'M OHIO GOT T'DO WITH PENNSYLVANIA?
ER... ARE YOU SERIOUS?
THIS IS A DISASTER OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE!

BOY... I SURE HOPE ROGER CAN PULL THIS OFF! YOU'VE BEEN SO DISTRAUGHT FOR THE PAST SIX WEEKS...
SEEING FOR YOURSELF WHAT HAPPENED SEEMS LIKE THE ONLY WAY TO...
JANE... I FEEL ...FUNNY...

WELL, SIR, SINCE YOU ARE HERE ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS, YOU'D BETTER GO ON THROUGH.
IN FACT, SINCE THE TERRAIN GETS PRETTY ROUGH...

"... LET ME ARRANGE FOR YOU TO USE ONE OF OUR VEHICLES..."
I... CAN'T BELIEVE WE ACTUALLY GOT AWAY WITH IT!
FREE PASSAGE! NO MILITARY ESCORT!

DON'T LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH, ROG.
DEB... HOW YOU DOIN', NOW?
I'M... OKAY.
I THINK.

IT WAS... JUST THIS... SORT OF WEIRD FEELING.
KINDA LIKE WHEN THE BABY MOVES ...ONLY...
ONLY DIF'RENT... Y'KNOW?

MM... SEEMS TO ME LIKE EVERY-THING ABOUT THIS PREGNANCY IS MORE THAN A LITTLE WEIRD.
I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOUR SAFETY, MADDIE. I MEAN, THE BABY'S FATHER WAS SOME KIND OF SUPERHERO.
IF THE BABY INHERITED ANY OF HIS POWERS...
WELL, I DON'T REALLY LIKE TO EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, BUT MAYBE YOU SHOULD CONSIDER A THERAPEUTIC ABORTION...
OH, NO!
I C'N'T DO THAT, JANE.
KENNY'S GHOST ASKED ME NOT TO...
WH-WHAT!?!
SKREEECH!
UH...YEAH.
I...DIN'T WANNA MENTION IT BEFORE ON ACCOUNT OF I KNOW HOW CRAZY IT SOUNDS...
BUT TWO WEEKS AGO WHEN I WUZ ASLEEP IN YOUR GUEST BEDROOM...
DUCK...?
HR-R-MPH?
DUCK...
K-KENNY...??

KENNY!
I THOUGHT YOU WUZ DEAD!
I... WAS, DUCK.
BUT I ...GOT BETTER...

WH-WHAT?
KENNY...
SHHH... SHHH...
I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET TOO EXCITED, DUCK.
NOT IN YOUR CONDITION.

MY...?
KENNY, WHAT'S GOIN' ON? TH' LAST TIME I SAW YOU YOU WUN'T EVEN ADMIT THIS BABY IS YOURS!
I KNOW.
I'M... SORRY, DUCK.
I WAS WRONG.

I WAS WRONG ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS.
BUT... BUT I'VE HAD TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT. ALL ALONE. AND... AND I'M SORRY I DENIED THE BABY... OUR BABY.

I... LOVE YOU, DUCK. I... ALWAYS HAVE.
AND THIS BABY... WELL, I WAS JUST STUPID BEFORE. I WAS BEING SOME KIND OF MACHO JERK, AS USUAL. NOW...
NOW IT'S DIFFERENT.

DIF'RENT? HOW, KENNY? WHY?
BECAUSE... BECAUSE OF THE LOVE I FEEL FOR YOU, DUCK. FOR YOU AND THE... OUR BABY.
ISN'T THAT REASON ENOUGH?
NOT BY HALF, KEN.

WHA...?!?
OH...NO!!
YES, KEN...
IT'S YOUR DEAR OLD PAL, MYRON.
NO! NO!
YOU'RE DEAD! YOU'RE DEAD!
I KILLED YOU!
YOU KILLED A LOT OF PEOPLE, KEN.
MAYBE A MILLION PEOPLE. IN LESS THAN A MICRO-SECOND!
AND, UNLIKE YOU, WE DIDN'T "GET BETTER!"
WE'RE STILL DEAD, KEN.

K-KENNY...?
WHAT'S... WHAT'S GOIN' ON...?
DON'T TRY TO EXPLAIN, KEN.
SHE CAN'T SEE OR HEAR ME.

ONLY YOU CAN SEE ME, KEN.
ONLY YOU CAN HEAR ME.
DON'T ASK ME HOW. I DON'T KNOW. IT HAS TO DO WITH SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED AFTER YOU DESTROYED PITTSBURGH.

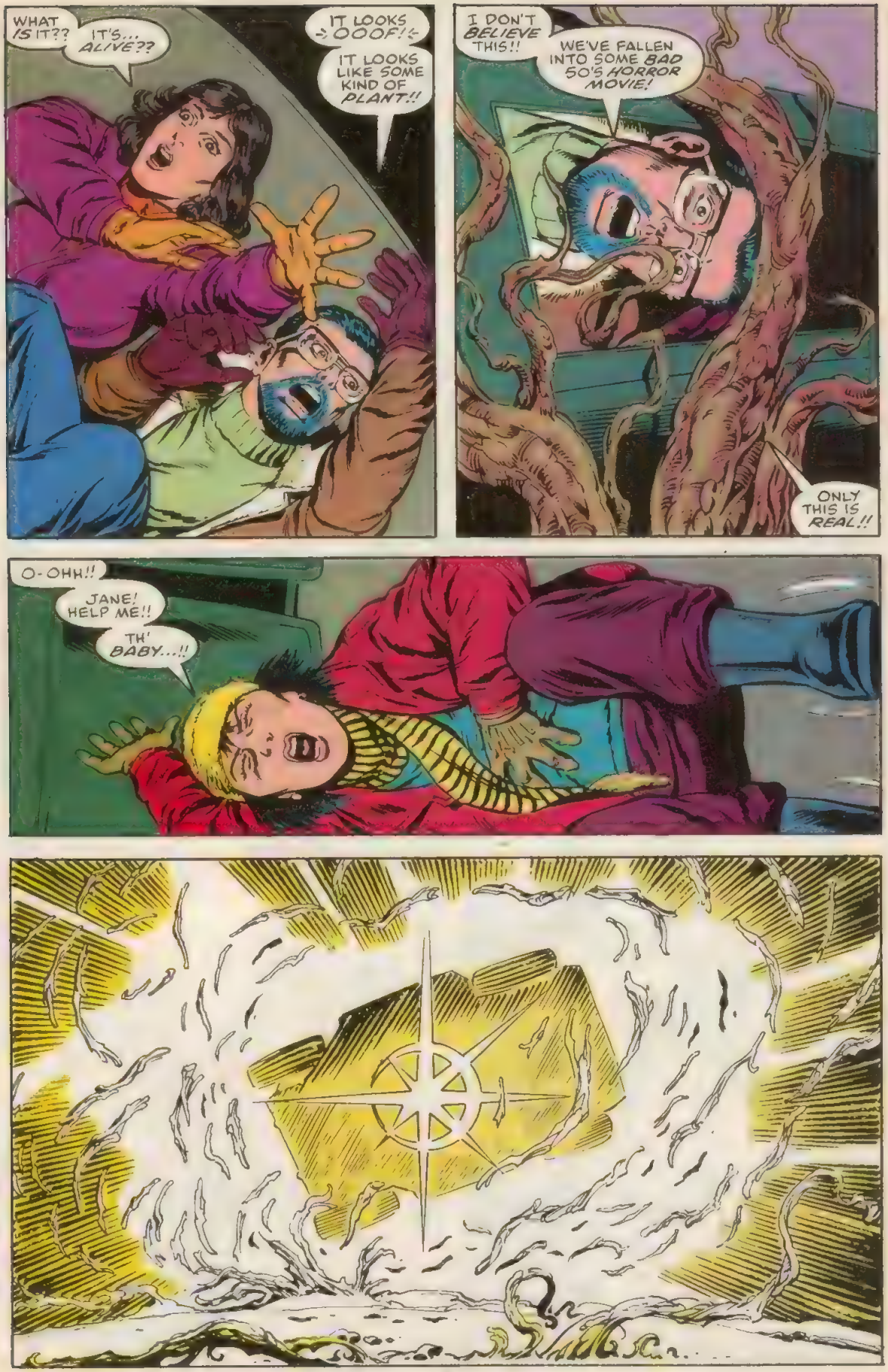
THERE WAS... SOMEONE THERE. SOMEONE WHO WAS NOT... HUMAN.
AND NOW... NOW I'M HERE, AND I'M GOING TO STAY, KEN. I'M GOING TO BE YOUR JIMMINY CRICKET. I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE YOU NEVER SCREW UP AGAIN.

AND YOU CAN START BY BEING HONEST WITH HER!
N-NO... MYRON, I CAN'T...
M-MYRON...??

KENNY, YOU GOTTA TELL ME WHAT'S GOIN' ON!
YOU SAID... MYRON...??
YES. HE'S...
DUCK...
DUCK, I'VE GOT TO GO NOW... JUST... PROMISE ME ONE THING.

PROMISE ME YOU WON'T DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT HARM THE BABY.
PLEASE... PLEASE...
IT'S... IT'S ALL THAT'S LEFT OF ME NOW, DUCK. ALL THAT... CAN... EVER... BE...

AND... AND THAT'S YOUR REASON?
BUT... MADDIE, SURELY YOU REALIZE THAT WAS JUST A... A DREAM!
YEAH,
YOUR SO-CALLED FRIEND MR. KEN CONNELL IS DEAD, MADDIE, AND THERE'S NO REASON TO BELIEVE IN GHOSTS.
EVEN IN THIS... STRANGE NEW WORLD...
YOU'RE WRONG, JANE.
EVERYTHIN'S DIF'R'NT NOW. EVERYTHIN'!
AND WHAT I SAW WAS REAL!
NOW, DON'T EXCITE YOURSELF, HONEY!
WE'VE GOT TO...
ROGER...? ARE YOU MOVING US AGAIN?
IT'S NOT ME, JANE!
IT'S SOMETHING OUTSIDE!!


WHAT IS IT??
IT'S... ALIVE??
IT LOOKS -OOOF!-
IT LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF PLANT!!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!!
WE'VE FALLEN INTO SOME BAD 50'S HORROR MOVIE!
ONLY THIS IS REAL!!
O-OHH!!
JANE! HELP ME!!
TH' BABY...!!

WHAT...
...HAPPENED...?

THAT...TREE THING...IT... EXPLODED!!
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT BUT KINDLING!!
BUT...HOW? AND HOW COULD IT HAVE...
I MEAN... IN THE FIRST PLACE...
OH-HHH-HH...

MADDIE!
OH-HHH...JANE...
PAIN...
I...FEEL... REAL...BAD...

ROGER! HELP ME!
I THINK SHE'S GOING INTO LABOR!
HERE...??
NOW??

JANE!!!

HELP MEEEEEEEEE
JANE...
WHAT CAN WE...
I DON'T KNOW! CHILDBIRTH IS ALWAYS PAINFUL... BUT THIS IS NOTHING I'VE EVER...

...OH NO...

OH NO!!!

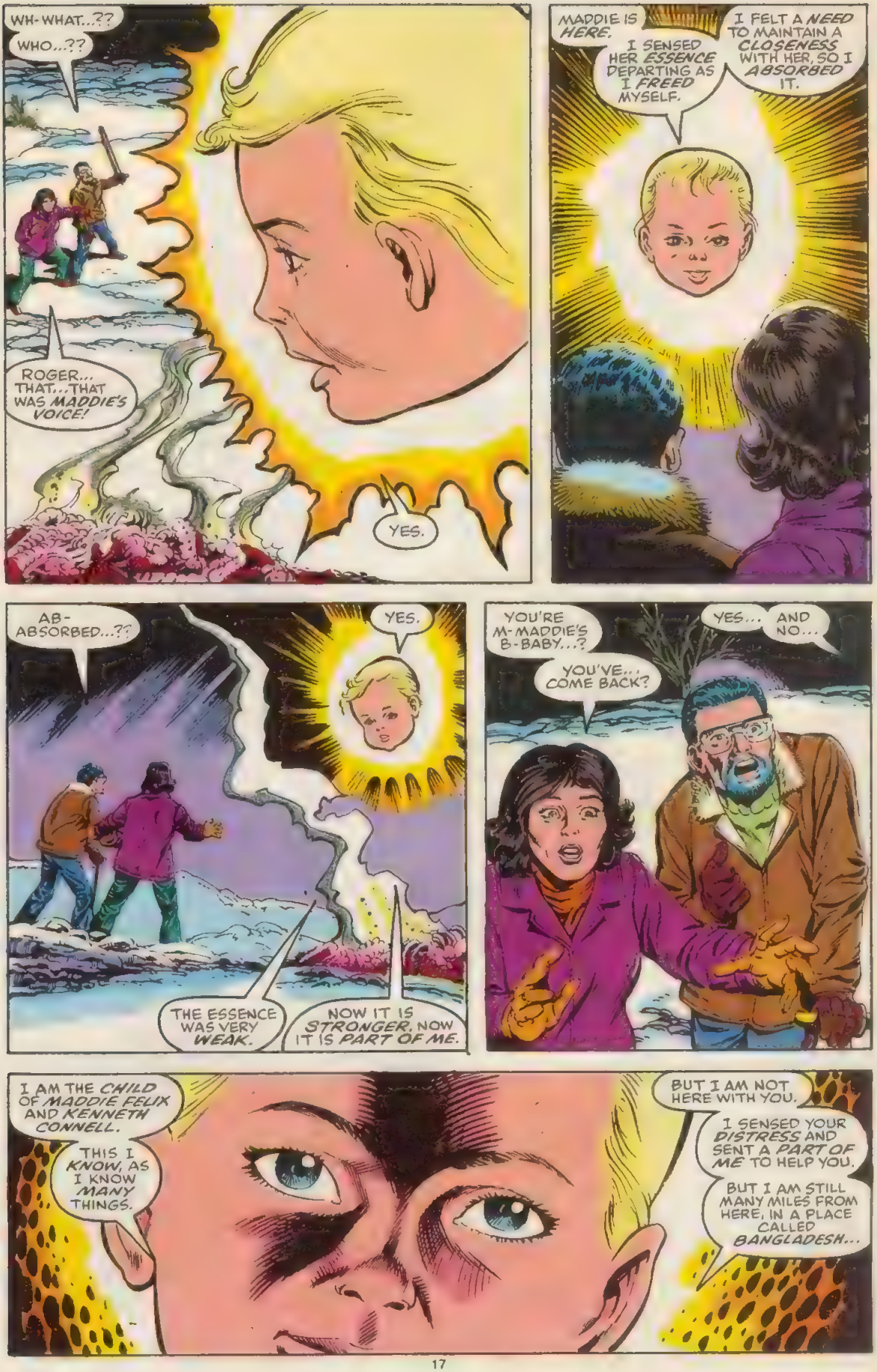
M-M-MADDIE...??

SKIPPER...
...YOU BETTER TAKE A LOOK AT THIS...
LEMME GUESS, YABLONOWITZ...
YOU GOT YOURSELF A WEIRD BLIP...
NO NEWS THERE, CAP'N. THE WHOLE SKY'S BIN WHACKED OUT SINCE PITTSBURGH.
BUT THIS IS... DIFFERENT.
MM...YOU MAY BE RIGHT.
TOO SMALL TO BE A PLANE...
TOO FAST TO BE A BIRD...
BUT IT LOOKS... SOFT. BIOLOGICAL...?
WHATEVER...
I THINK WE BETTER TAKE A LOOK AT IT.
"SCRAMBLE D FLIGHT..."
OKAY, HOLD IN A LOOSE FORMATION, YOU GUYS...

WE DON'T WANNA GIVE THIS BOGEY AN EASY TARGET TILL WE KNOW WHAT IT IS!
USAF
YOU THINK IT'S A HOSTILE, SKIPPER?
BUNKER, IN CASE YOU DIDN'T NOTICE, THE WHOLE WORLD GOT SERIOUSLY HOSTILE 'ROUND CHRISTMAS.
NOW, KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN...
ANYBODY GOT ANY-THING?
I THINK SO...
...BUT I AIN'T SAYIN' NOTHIN' TILL YOU SEE IT TOO!
HOL-EEEE SPIT!!

ROGER... I JUST DON'T FEEL RIGHT ABOUT THIS...
TO LEAVE HER LIKE THIS...
I KNOW, BUT WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO, JANE?
THE JEEP IS USELESS.
WE CAN'T CARRY HER...
IT'S GOING TO BE ALL WE CAN DO TO GET OUT OF THIS MESS ALIVE OURSELVES, HONEY.
MADDIE WOULD UNDERSTAND. SHE... WAS A GOOD KID, EXCEPT FOR WHEN SHE WAS HOOKED UP WITH THAT CONNELL IDIOT.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I NEVER CARED FOR HIM, MUCH.
NOW... HE'S KILLED HER, AND MAYBE ALL THOSE OTHER HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, TOO.
NOT MUCH POINT IN THINKING ABOUT THAT NOW.
WE BETTER START HIKING. I THINK WE'RE ONLY ABOUT A MILE FROM THE EDGE OF THE PITT, AND THERE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE...
R-ROGER...
RRRRRRR
WHAT IN THE NAME OF...??
GRRRRRRR

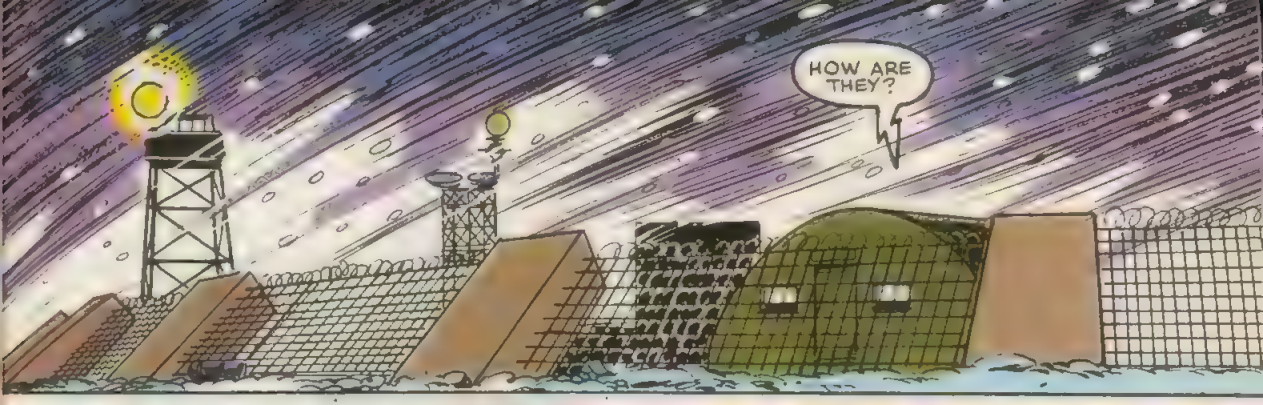
GGRRAHHHRRR!
HELLO, ROGER.
HELLO, JANE.


WH-WHAT...??
WHO...??
ROGER... THAT...THAT WAS MADDIE'S VOICE!
YES.
MADDIE IS HERE.
I SENSED HER ESSENCE DEPARTING AS I FREED MYSELF.
I FELT A NEED TO MAINTAIN A CLOSENESS WITH HER, SO I ABSORBED IT.
AB-ABSORBED...??
YES.
THE ESSENCE WAS VERY WEAK.
NOW IT IS STRONGER. NOW IT IS PART OF ME.
YOU'RE M-MADDIE'S B-BABY...?
YOU'VE... COME BACK?
YES... AND NO...
I AM THE CHILD OF MADDIE FELIX AND KENNETH CONNELL.
THIS I KNOW, AS I KNOW MANY THINGS.
BUT I AM NOT HERE WITH YOU.
I SENSED YOUR DISTRESS AND SENT A PART OF ME TO HELP YOU.
BUT I AM STILL MANY MILES FROM HERE, IN A PLACE CALLED BANGLADESH...

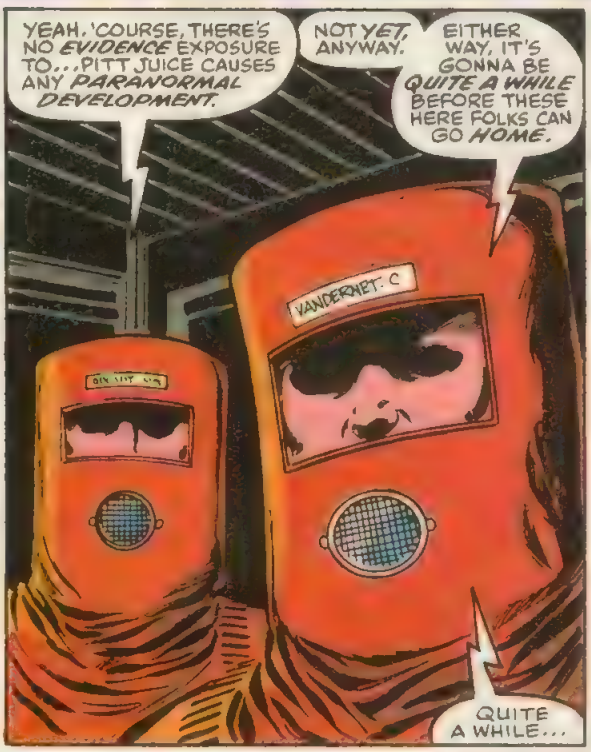
P-PART OF YOU...?
NO.
ALL MY BODY IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.
YOU MEAN... YOUR HEAD IS HERE, BUT THE REST OF YOU IS...IS...?
THE FORM IS SIMPLY A MANIFESTATION OF ESSENCE, A SHAPE FOR THAT WHICH HAS NO SHAPE.
THIS IS TOO STRANGE! THAT'S MADDIE'S VOICE, BUT MADDIE NEVER TALKED LIKE THAT...
I KNOW MUCH MY MOTHER DID NOT, JANE. AS I GREW WITHIN HER BODY MY MIND REACHED OUT, PROBING, LEARNING...
WHILE MY MOTHER WALKED THROUGH THE STREETS OF PITTSBURGH...
MY MIND WANDERED THE DARK AVENUES BETWEEN THE PLANETS.
I HAVE SEEN THE SUNRISE THROUGH THE RINGS OF SATURN...
I HAVE HEARD THE SINGING WINDS IN THE ICE CAVES OF EUROPA.
I HAVE DRIFTED OVER SEAS OF BOILING ROCK, ON THE BLISTERING DAYSIDE OF MERCURY.
HOW CAN THAT BE? HOW CAN YOU BE WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE...
HOW CAN YOU HAVE SO MUCH POWER...
AND STILL HAVE MURDERED YOUR MOTHER??
MURDERED..?
YES, MURDERED!!
YOU KILLED HER! YOU SAY YOU ABSORBED HER...
BUT ONLY YOUR VOICE IS MADDIE FELIX, NOTHING ELSE IS HER!
NOTHING!

NO, JANE...
YOU ARE... WRONG...
AM I?
AM I??
THEN LET ME TALK TO HER! YOU SAY SHE'S STILL THERE, INSIDE YOU.
LET HER TELL ME SHE'S ALL RIGHT. SHE'S HAPPY.
WELL...?
I...
...CANNOT...

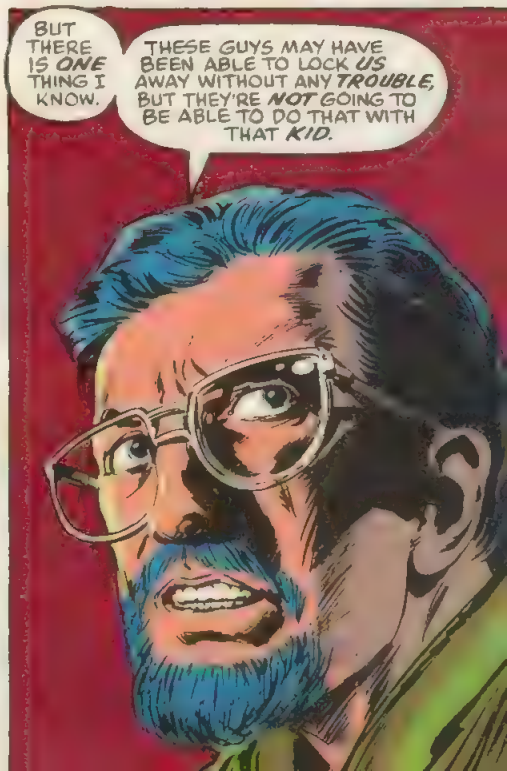
HE'S... GONE.
JANE... HOW DID YOU KNOW...
I... DIDN'T
I JUST... COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE WAS SAYING.
I MEAN, I KNOW THE WHOLE WORLD HAD BEEN TURNED INSIDE OUT SINCE CONNELL REVEALED HIMSELF TO HAVE THE STAR BRAND,
BUT... BUT EVEN WITH EVERYTHING AS CRAZY AS IT IS, DEATH IS STILL DEATH.
MADDIE FELIX 1964 - 1988
AND POOR MADDIE IS... DEAD.
I... WONDER WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN, NOW?
THAT... STAR CHILD IS STILL OUT THERE, AND IF EVEN A PART OF WHAT HE SAID IS TRUE...
HEY!
...UH OH...
WHAT TH' BLAZES ARE YOU DOIN' HERE? THIS IS STILL A RESTRICTED AREA!
WE... ER...
WE GOT LOST, AND...
...AND...


HOW ARE THEY?

OKAY. SO FAR AS I CAN *TELL*. IT'S HARD TO BE *SURE*.
THE AIR AROUND HERE IS *FULL* OF *ATOMIZED PITTSBURGH*.
"*PITT JUICE*!" SOME OF 'EM ARE CALLIN' IT.
AN' THESE TWO WERE OUT THERE *ALONE*, UNPROTECTED? FOR A COUPLE HOURS, AT LEAST?


YEAH, 'COURSE, THERE'S NO *EVIDENCE* EXPOSURE TO... PITT JUICE CAUSES ANY *PARANORMAL DEVELOPMENT*.
NOT *YET*, ANYWAY.
EITHER WAY, IT'S GONNA BE *QUITE A WHILE* BEFORE THESE HERE FOLKS CAN GO *HOME*.
VANDERHET. C
QUITE A WHILE...

ROGER...
WHAT... DO YOU THINK THEY'RE GOING TO *DO* TO US? I'VE BEEN POKED AND PRODDED IN PLACES I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I *HAD*!
I... DON'T KNOW, JANE.
I FEEL LIKE WE'VE JUST DROPPED INTO THE MIDDLE OF *NAZI GERMANY*.


BUT THERE IS *ONE* THING I KNOW.
THESE GUYS MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LOCK *US* AWAY WITHOUT ANY *TROUBLE*, BUT THEY'RE *NOT* GOING TO BE ABLE TO DO THAT WITH THAT *KID*.

"THE WORLD JUST CHANGED--AGAIN--
"AND THIS TIME WE'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO KNOW ABOUT IT...!"
NEXT ISSUE: THE SEARCH FOR KEN CONNELL! DON'T MISS
THE SINS OF THE FATHER...
IN SIXTY DAYS

Transcripts of the State of the Union Address, January 26, 1988

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished members of Congress, honored guests and fellow citizens.

I come before my country with a heavy heart and a burning anger. We have suffered through one of our greatest tragedies and we must remain strong. We have seen our fellow countrymen callously struck down in a devastating explosion which destryed the city of Pittsburgh and killed at least a million of our brothers and sisters.

You have all been informed of what occured, and should also feel safe that the ramifications of the explosions have been successfully contained to the impact area. We are safe for now, but suffice to say, we can not let an indignity of this magnitude deter us. We can not allow the barbaric perpetrators of this crime go unpunished. We must take stock of ourselves and proceed on a course that is both direct and just.

It is with sadness, but undaunting determination that I call on my fellow countrymen to prepare themselves. Prepare themselves for the opportunity to avenge this horrific, cowardly attack on our people—on our land.

Because of America's need to show the nations of this world that we stand prepared to fight back against our aggressors, I will be calling on Congress tomorrow to expand and restructure our Selective Service Registration system. I will be asking all Americans, men and women, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five to register under this program in the event of a military mobilization emergency.

All those young men previously registered under the current system will be asked to reregister so that we may better implement this program.

This will be a comprehensive registration to better prepare our country's defenses against the possibility of aggressive actions by hostile nations. We will be registering people in the anticipation that they will fulfill combat and non-combat roles in the event of a war.

Let me state clearly, that I do not want to see the blood of my countrymen spilled in the fields of battle, but neither can we permit, as a nation, the wholesale disregard for human rights that was shown in the attack on Pittsburgh.

If a message was being sent in the attack, it is one that the people of this country are ready and willing to respond to. We will not allow our borders to be breached, our land to be desecrated, our children to be hurt.

The United States will fight back, when need be, where need be.

And we will be prepared to fight back in measure. This is not a warning, this is a statement of fact. Participation in the proposed revisions of the Selective Services program will make this statement ring true throughout the world.

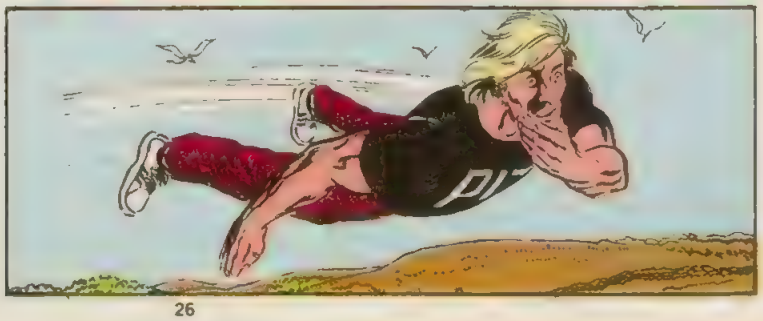
I ask for the support of my colleagues in Congress. I ask for the support of the American people. I ask God watch over us in the times to come. God bless you all . . .

CONNELL, KENNETH

Real name: Kenneth Connell
Occupation: Former auto mechanic
Other aliases: Star Brand
Legal status: Citizen of the United States with no criminal record
Place of birth: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Date of birth: 9-27-61
Date of paranormality: 7-27-86
Marital status: Single
Family: Unknown
Extent of education: Graduate of High School
Hobbies and interests: Automobiles, motorcycle racing, womanizing
Religion: Catholic (non-practicing)
Group affiliation: None
Current base of operations: The Pitt
Height: 6' 5"
Weight: 230 lbs.
Eyes: Blue
Hair: Blond
Known parabilities: None
Weapons: Kenneth Connell possesses an alien energy known as the Star Brand. This energy gives its possessor apparently infinite power. The power is only limited by the imagination of the user. Through use of the Star Brand, Connell has exhibited the power to fly at unlimited speeds, lift heavy objects (a railroad car, an automobile, a military aircraft, and others), and fire blasts of concussive energy at varying power levels up to an as yet unknown maximum amount (but at least equal to that of the force of a detonated tactical nuclear weapon). Connell, using the Star Brand, has also been able to withstand the vacuum of space and the extreme pressures of the Atlantic Ocean floor for days at a time. The Star Brand enables Connell to survive without eating or breathing.

While in possession of the Star Brand, the user displays a star-like tattoo on his skin. This tattoo can be moved to any part of the user's body.

The power of the Star Brand can be voluntarily transferred from the user to any other living or unliving object through physical contact. This transfer will leave the user with 10% of the power that he started with.
Abilities and talents: Kenneth Connell is an experienced motorcyle racer. He also lifts weights and is extremely athletic and well-coordinated.
Peculiarities: Connell was unaware of the full extent of the power contained within the Star Brand, until he accidentally used it to create a 50' mile-wide crater where Pittsburgh formerly stood.



Dear Star Brand,

I'm just writing to say that STAR BRAND #11 was terrific! The costume on the cover was awesome (and Ken thinks the Duck is a ditz!). I do have a few questions:

1) Where is the letter column?

2) Why did you change the title to THE STAR BRAND from just plain STAR BRAND?

Evan S. Karp
8 Derringer Road
Chelmsford, MA 01824

Evan, if Ken is lucky, he'll learn to appreciate Maddie (Debbie's REAL name, for those of you who haven't been paying attention) before it's too late. The title change puts the focus of the book where it now belongs . . . on the most powerful weapon in the New Universe. And as you will soon see, Ken Connell isn't the only one who will have control of it. Some former Pittsburgh residents might even say that Ken didn't have control of it after last issue!

Dear Mr. Byrne,

Your work on THE STAR BRAND recently has renwed my interest not only in the plight of Ken Connell, but in the entire *New Universe*. Some interesting twists like your appearance with Mr. Mackie and Mr. Gruenwald at a comic convention in Pittsburgh make this comic even more enjoyable. A question comes to mind . . . did you die in the Old Man's assault on Connell? If not, did you and the others make it out of Pittsburgh before Kenny blew the place up in White Event number two? Just curious.

I can hardly wait for THE PITT to see just how cataclysmic this White Event is, and to guess at its long range effects on the future of the world.

Scott Braddock
4053 Claridge St.
Philadelphia, PA 19124

Scott, John Byrne no longer exists in the *New Universe*. He and Mark were blown to bits in issue #12. As of this issue, THE STAR BRAND will be *ghost* written by Mr. Byrne. Sorry for the bad pun, but your illustrious editor didn't far too well in issue #12 either!

Dear Star Brand People,

Ever since the beginnings of the *New Universe*, I have been waiting to find out the cause of the White Event. Previews said that it would be revealed in STAR BRAND #11, and I waited long and anxiously for that issue. When I finally picked up a copy, it said nothing about the White Event. Why? Could you please explain and tell me where I can find an explanation of that darned White Event?

Chris Benson
3618 Burlingham Drive
Lithonia, GA 30038

Chris, the origin of the White Event wasn't in issue #11 because it was in issue #12. Sorry about the confusion there!

Dear John,

I liked the changes made in STAR BRAND #11. The book seems to have direction again.

I really hate Myron, I can't believe Kenny actually subjected himself to another visit with such a negative influence. I really hoped Kenny takes Myron off his list of true friends.

Wow, Maddie is pregnant? I hope Kenny will help her and give her the support she needs. I don't want Maddie's pregnancy to bring her and Kenny falsely together. Maybe this will make Kenny realize just how much he really does love her, though.

Jeff Mitchell
1794 W. Minnehaha
St. Paul, MN 55104

I think Ken can just throw out that list, Jeff. A guy who blows up an entire American city isn't going to have a big bunch of fans. I'd say you're right about Myron's negative influence, but ya shoulda warned us sooner, guy.

Dear Howard,

"Ka-blooey!! Pittsburgh, Byrned to a crisp! Marvel writer missing and presumed turned to ashes! Pirates, Penguins, and Steelers demise no great loss to sports world! Reagan awakened from mid-day nap and told of tragedy, promptly goes back to sleep!"

Seriously folks, ads like that on THE STAR BRAND #12 are a leading cause of heart failure in America among folks such as I who can't stand the Marvel Universe

When I saw the ad for the first time in CBG I was angry, because one reason I so love the New Universe was its lack of connections to the Marvel Universe. I calmed myself and hoped for the best, considering the setting of the story.

The X-Men comment on the cover and the story itself calmed my fears considerably

Starting with the last two panels of page 7, I was mesmerized by the story. It was at once amusing, thought provoking, fascinating, merciless and horrifying in the face of the brutal inevitability of its climax. Thanks, Pops!

Thanks also to the art team for a great job, especially the awful beauty and finality of pages 21 and 22. Based on a scale of five skunks (unredeemable) to one skunk (barely readable) and one star (readable) to five stars (awesome), the Comicaholic gives THE STAR BRAND #12 . . . FOUR STARS!

Kiril Kundurazieff
2439 Merrywood Ste
Pomona, CA 91767

Thanks for all the praise, Kiril. We're glad you enjoyed the issue. You don't have to worry about a collision between the Marvel and the New Universes . . . although the New, right now, should have you worrying plenty all on its own with the impending draft and all!

Dear Star Clan,

STAR BRAND is great. I love it

Kenny has done a very good job handling the power of the Star Brand. People always wonder what they would do if the "ultimate power" was placed at their disposal. I know some people wouldn't do as good a job as Kenny has.

And I must say you have handled the execution of the grand comic very well. My eyes see with joy.

Stacey Dorchester
57 South St.
Marcellus, NY 13108

Two letters of praise in a row! We're blushing so hard we can hardly continue. We think we should talk about the "great job" Ken's doing handling the Star Brand, though.

Dear Starbranders,

So the White Event was a product of the Brand. Hardly surprising, and now a second White Event! What really prompted me to write were the revelations about the power

It grows with time, it extends life expectancy, it's a pretty permanent fixture.

Now, as I see things, all the main characters in the New Universe have inherited some of the Star Brand power (except Jenny Swenson, of course). Does this mean these characters will increase in power?

It must now be very obvious to the public that something strange is happening all over the world. The normal reaction to the unknown is fear, followed by group violence and hysteria. Thus, if anybody figures out the connection between Ken and the explosion, he will be a bigger worldwide villain than Lucifer himself. Does this make Ken a possible target for *Justice?*

I had thought that the Brand was the power and if removed, Ken would be helpless. This wouldn't have affected Maddie's baby, which would have been perfectly normal. Now, I don't know what to expect!

Ken Connell is stupid, arrogant, and an all-around brat . . . thank goodness for a real character! Will the power corrupt him? The power obviously doesn't increase intelligence, so I'd guess the old man didn't build the spaceship. Was it Ken's imagination, or are there really aliens and a war at the other end of the galaxy?

Andrew Miller
49 Toronto Avenue
Howden East, Livingston
West Lothian, Scotland
EH54 6BN

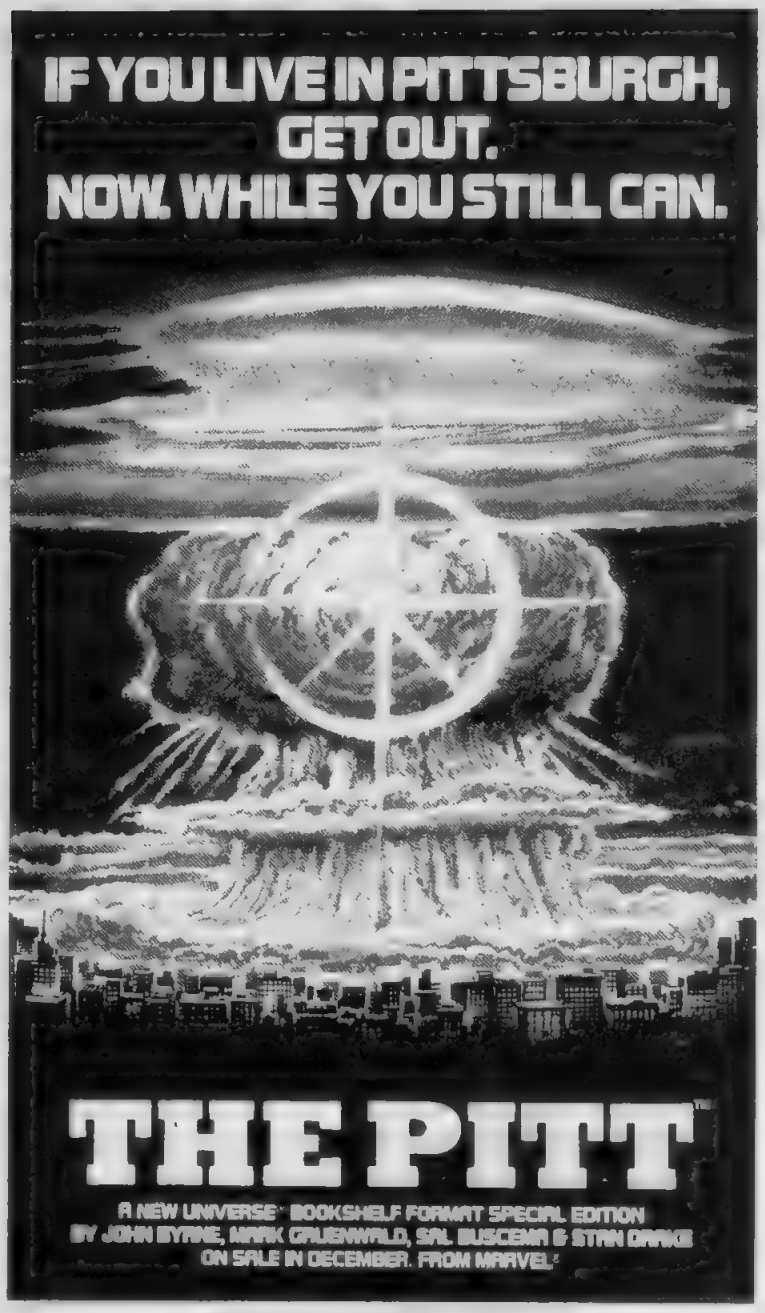
Andrew, the release of the Star Brand energies over Pittsburgh will always be known as the *Black Event*, because it was a dark day of death and destruction in the New Universe. Justice will be searching for the paranormal responsible for the death of millions. And the Black Event will create some new paranormals, magnify powers of existing ones, and mutate others in a way not yet seen in the New U. Oh, by the way, don't exclude Jenny Swensen, a.k.a. Spitfire, from these changes. In an upcoming issue of D.P. 7 the affects of bathing in Pitt juice will be shown and they'll have to be seen to be believed.

Dear Star Brand,

A cheap shot to use the X-Men on the cover, although you came up with a logical reason for their presence! And I should know from cheap shots, since I've been taking them at Ken Connell since his series started! Quite a double bombshell Duck, uh, Maddie dropped. Ken's reaction once again makes clear that the character traits the Old Man was looking for in the person he gave the Star Brand were not quite the same ones Abin Sur sought when he picked Hal Jordan to take his place as Green Lantern! Of course, they had different motives at the time!

Love the piece at the Comicon where John, Mark, and Howard let Ken know how unsuccessful his costume is. Of course, one of the giveaways they failed to mention was for the man who gave the hero his powers to walk into a room full of people and call said hero by his civilian name! The Old Man also kinda sums up Ken's basic problem: he is a fool, albeit a super-powered one! So I suppose the issue's finale was inevitable when you consider this is a case of great power handed to someone without great responsibility! Maybe Ken should have followed Myron's advice, eh?

Robert Kowalski
3878 Garvin St
Detroit, MI 48212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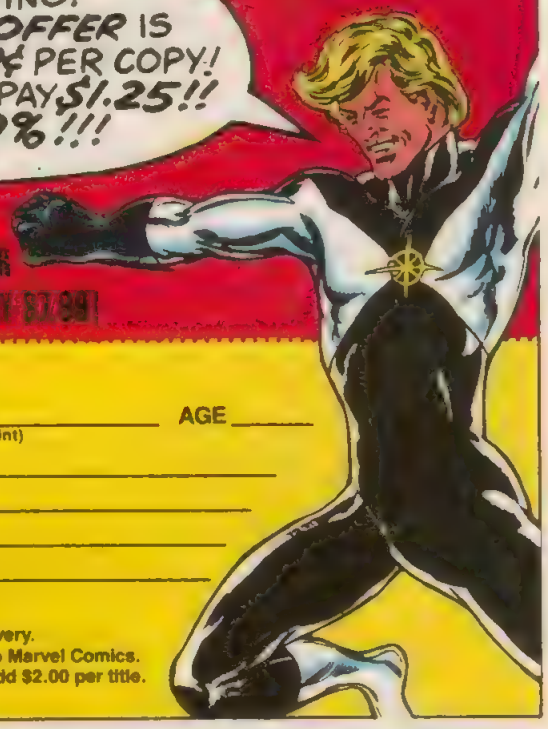
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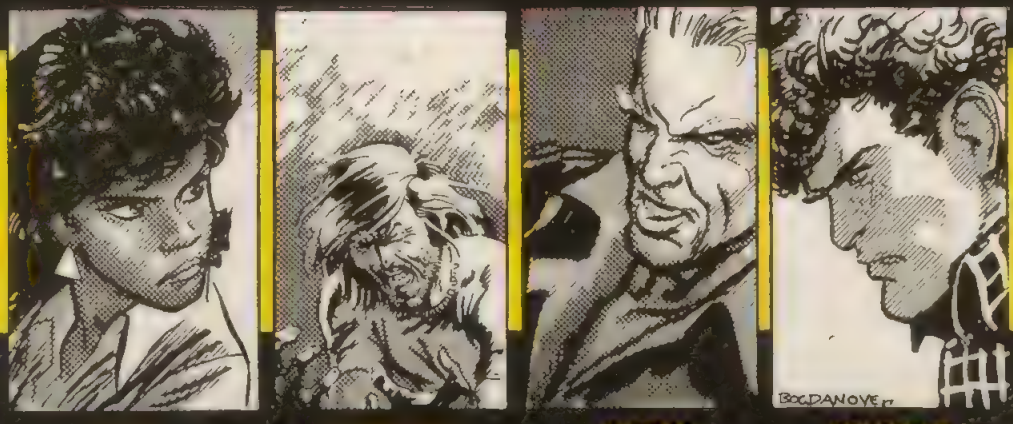

D.P.7 STARBRAND JUSTICE PSI-FORCE

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NEXT ISSUE

universe news

Volume II Issue 1 — MAY 1988

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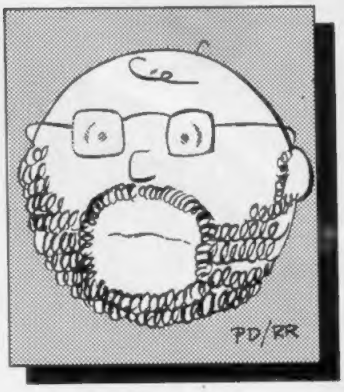
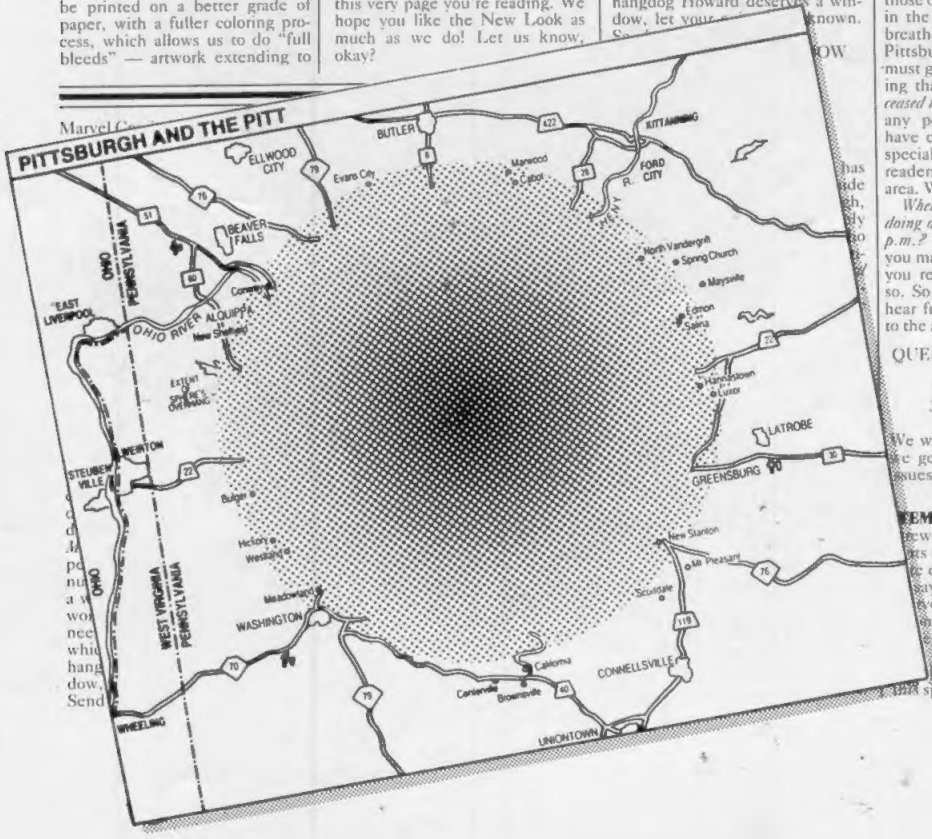


Assistant Editor on: MARVEL AGE 1–5
Marvel freelance credits (past): Researcher/writer on HANDBOOK; writer on PETER PARKER, WEB OF SPIDER-MAN, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, MARK HAZZARD: MERC
Marvel freelance credits (present): HULK, JUSTICE
My hobbies are: Collecting Oreo middles, animation cels, stuffed toys.
The single work which I am most proud of is: The Mona Lisa.
My pet peeves are: House-broken.
My place of birth is: A national shrine.
My greatest accomplishment outside the comics field are: "Knight Life"; the "Photon" books; "Base on Balls"; and learning how to walk and chew gum at the same place.
My oddest habit is: Always wearing hats at conventions and walking like John Cleese.
If they were making a movie of my life, I'd like to see my part played by: Tom Hanks or Ann-Margret.
The reason I got into comics was: My parents told me I couldn't make a living at it.
People who knew me in High School thought I was: There.
My favorite performers are: Harry Anderson, Spuds Mackenzie, and Gary Carter.
The last good book I read was: Overdue.
The last good movie I saw was: DIRTY DANCING.
The biggest influences on my work include: Stan Lee, Mel Brooks, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Arthur Conan Doyle, William Shakespeare, Fabian Nicieza, and the New York Mets.
My greatest unfulfilled ambition in the comics field is: Winning an argument with Carol Kalish.
The worst part of my job is: Watching the confused expressions of my editors when I describe my latest plots.
When nobody's looking I like to: Steal second base.
The one thing I really want the world to know about me is: I lie on questionnaires.

ITEM: Say, have you noticed our *New Look* for the *New U*? Every single New U book now sports a brand spanking new logo, designed by one of Marvel's top Bullpenners, letterer extraordinaire *Ken Lopez*. But the New Look doesn't end with our *covers*. We've redesigned the *whole comics package* in order to give you rapt readers something you can't get anywhere else! Beginning this month, D.P. 7, JUSTICE, PSI-FORCE and STAR BRAND will be printed on a better grade of paper, with a fuller coloring process, which allows us to do "full bleeds" — artwork extending to the very edge of the paper. Furthermore, we're eliminating all "outside" advertising and increasing our editorial material from 22 pages to 28 pages. These extra pages will be used not only to expand our lead features but also to run special solo stories and fact-filled pinup pages. We're also throwing in a nifty new frontispiece page to recap and update the ongoing saga of our nefarious New Universers, a next issue cover spotlight page, and a new look for this very page you're reading. We hope you like the New Look as much as we do! Let us know, okay?

ITEM: The New Universe has been touted as the world outside your window. Curiously, though, it just so happens that the only editor up at mighty Marvel who does not have an office with a window is the New U guru — *Howard Mackie!* How can his superiors expect him to perform his job to the nukin' max if he doesn't even have a window from which to view the world outside his window? Howard needs *your* help to receive that which is rightfully his. If you think hangdog Howard deserves a window, let your [illegible] known. Send [illegible] OW Marvel C[illegible]



ITEM: As every nukin' New U reader knows by now, the fair city of Pittsburgh is no more, having been totally obliterated in a paroxysm of unfathomable energy, as told in STAR BRAND #13 and THE PITT Bookshelf Edition. This reality-rending occurrence, the most significant phenomenon since the White Event that began the New Universe saga, is starting to be called the Black Event, and its far-reaching consequences are only beginning to be felt. But those of you Pittsburghers who live in the agonizing *old* universe can breathe a sigh of relief that *your* Pittsburgh was spared. Still, it must give you people a chill knowing that a mere reality away, *you ceased to exist!* To help make up for any potential trauma we might have caused, we'd like to pose a special *Question of the Month* to all readers from the greater Pittsburgh area. We want to know . . .

Where were you and what were you doing on December 22, 1987 at 6:22 p.m.? Interesting question? One you may have thought about when you read THE PITT? We hope so. So, Pittsburghers, we want to hear from you! Send your answer to the above question to:

QUESTION OF THE MONTH
c/o Howard Mackie
Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

We will print all the best answers we get in a special section three issues from now!

ITEM: It's time to bid a fond farewell to one of the best assistants an editor could ever be fortunate enough to work with. Suffice to say that the hallowed halls of Marvel comics will be a little dimmer without the effervescent presence of Juicy *Joanne Spaldo*. Who will step into the breach as New U's assistant guru? Check out this space next month!

THEY WERE EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES. NOTHING LASTS FOREVER.

THE END BEGINS. ISSUE #291, BY
WALT SIMONSON, JOHN BUSCEMA AND TOM PALMER.
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A SPECIAL NEW UNIVERSE PIN-UP